



VALENTINA BY KEVIN MCDERMOTT

About the book

Much of the world is burning or flooded. The temperate zones are still habitable – and one small island is teeming with climate refugees. Life in the Badlands is dangerous, disease-ridden, violent and controlled by gangsters and terrorists. But Valentina lives high in the privileged Citadel, at the heart of the heavily protected Green Zone. She is the president's daughter, sheltered, spoiled and arrogant. However, when she makes a secret trip to the Badlands with her friends, Pippa and Damian, she is forced to face up to the realities of life on the island and accept the responsibilities her position brings with it.

Valentina is a coming-of-age novel and a story about what might happen if our worst fears on climate change come to pass.

About the author

Kevin Mc Dermott lives in Dublin. He works as a teacher educator and has compiled and edited many books on English. *Valentina* is his third novel. Kevin got the idea for *Valentina* when he read one of James Lovelock's books on climate change. He was so taken with Lovelock's ideas that: a) he went to Italy for three months and wrote the novel, and b) he moved to a new house way above sea level.

BEFORE YOU READ...

Look at the cover of the novel.

- Jot down three things you see or notice on the cover.
- Offer two thoughts based on what you see.
- Identify one question you would like answered.



EXPLORATIONS

Valentina's world

1. Describe the kind of world Valentina inhabits.
2. What privileges does Valentina enjoy as the President's daughter?
3. What constraints does Valentina experience?
4. Based on the opening chapters of the novel, rate Valentina's happiness. Explain your answer.
5. Describe Valentina's school, St Thomas Aquinas.
6. What is Valentina's attitude to her brother John, and to the Pilgrim Community?
7. On the first trip to the Valley of the Thrushes what kinds of questions does Pippa ask Joshua? What does this tell you about her?
8. What aspects of life in the Valley of the Thrushes does Valentina come to enjoy?
9. At the state reception for the New Zealand delegation, what does Valentina mean when she says her father rescued her?
10. How does Valentina's relationship with her mother change over the course of the novel?
11. What do you think of Damian's behaviour when he told Valentina about the Green land Ice Cap?
12. How did a) Valentina and b) Pippa react to the news?

Leaving the Citadel

1. What, in your view, does Valentina most fear about leaving the Citadel?
2. Joshua offers Valentina a chance to avoid leaving the Green Zone. Why, do you think, does she not take it?
3. When Valentina leaves the Pilgrim community with Joshua and the others, what is her first adventure in the world beyond The Citadel?
4. Why, do you think, do Valentina and Pippa like Sandybrook House so much?
5. What does Valentina learn in Sandybrook House about the importance of her role as the President's daughter?

Capture

1. Describe how Valentina and Pippa fall into the hands of the AOT.
2. How did Pippa and Valentina support each other when they were held captive in the pit in the ground?
3. What is your impression of Rocco?
4. Do you have any sympathy for his point of view? Explain your thinking.



The Escape

1. What is the cause of the attack on the Headquarters of the AOT?
2. How does Valentina explain her escape from death?
3. What, in your view, is the lowest point in Valentina's personal journey?
4. How are Valentina and Pippa treated by Brihen and her family?
5. From her brief experience of the Badlands, do you think the region is well named? Explain your thinking.
6. Why, do you think, did Valentina decide to spend a night in Sandybrook House after her escape?
7. Do you think Mattie and her father treated Valentina in a fair way?
8. Do you think Valentina will make a good President? Explain your answer.

Quick review

1. Give a summary of the novel in no more than ten sentences.
2. Complete the following statements.
 - When I was reading *Valentina* I was reminded of...
 - The one thing I really like about the novel is...
 - A question I'd like to have answered is...
 - I wonder why ...
 - I'm not sure about...
 - What I learned from reading *Valentina* is...
3. Give titles to five of your favourite chapters in the novel. Explain your suggestions.

Character of Valentina

1. Having read the novel, how do you think might Valentina answer these 'big' questions?
 - a) Who am I?
 - b) Who can I trust?
 - c) Where do I belong?
 - d) Who loves me?
 - e) Where can I feel safe?
 - f) Who will I turn in when I'm in trouble?
 - g) How brave am I?
 - h) What will I do with my life?



2. Select what you consider to be the three most important moments in the novel for Valentina.
 - a) Give a title to each moment and describe what happens in three or four sentences.
 - b) Use two or three adjectives to describe what we learn about Valentina from the moment.
 - c) In three or four words, describe the world that Valentina inhabits as revealed in this moment.
 - d) Describe the support (or lack of it) that Valentina receives from those around him at this moment on the journey.
 - e) Describe your reaction as a reader to the moment.
 - f) Choose the most important line or short quotation from the moment.
 - g) Suggest music that you would use as the soundtrack for the moments you have chosen.

3. Valentina brings a small backpack on her journey to the Badlands. She only has room for five objects which mean a great deal to her. What, do you think, does she bring? Explain your choices.

Themes of the Novel

1. Which two of the following are closest to your understanding of the main themes of the novel?
 - Climate Change
 - Growing Up
 - Immigration
 - Survival
 - Adventure
 - Identify
 - Friendship
 - Belonging
 - Love
 - Family

Explain your choices.

2. Based on your understanding of the themes of the novel, suggest a new title.
3. Write a blurb for the novel which alerts readers to the main themes of *Valentina*.



Novel into Film

1. Write a one page 'pitch' to a film producer, explaining why the story would make a great movie.
2. Write a tagline which could be used to promote the film.
3. Casting Director:
What actors would you cast for the roles of Valentina, Pippa and Damian in a film version of the novel?

Imaginative Interventions

1. Late Late Show
Your classroom is TV studio. Select one student play the TV Host. The 'programme' is a celebration of Valentina and her safe return from the Badlands. The invited guests include: Pippa, Damian, Joshua and Thomas. John and Valentina's mother also make guest appearances, as does Cordelia. Each guest is interviewed by the host and can also contribute to the panel discussion. There is scope to improvise, but you must stay true to the novel. If someone tries to change the story to put him or herself in a better light, it is up to the host or the other characters to set the record straight.
2. Script a scene between Valentina's mother and father after news comes through that she has been kidnapped by the AOT.
3. Front Page News
Create a tabloid front page which reports on Valentina's escape from the AOT. Compose a suitable headline and subheading. Write the opening paragraph of the report. Be sure to capture the style and tone of tabloid news reporting.

Group Project – Climate Change

Working in groups, undertake a project on climate change. Present your findings in a visual way. If you can, use free software like Photo Story. Each member of the group should research one aspect of the project and share the findings with the other group members. Below is a list of possible areas of research.

- James Lovelock – biography
- James Lovelock and Gaia Theory
- James Lovelock on climate change
- Greenland Ice Cap
- Climate Refugees